178 286 433 In Kanegusuku, for example, mat weaving is still of some importance as a home industry. Where formerly nearly all of the houses were engaged in production of mats, today less than half are so engaged, and the acreage planted in sedge is but ten percent of the prewar level. The war caused the loss of many machines; increasing emphasis on food production has brought a conversion of sedge fields into paddies; access to the better markets in Japan is now more difficult than before the war; it is felt to be too time-consuming and the young women today do not like this work.

Formerly there were a number of men in Kanegusuku who were able to construct the looms used in mat weaving. Today, however, no one constructs his own looms; instead, they are purchased from a manufacturer in Itoman. [463] This particular example is symptomatic of the general decline of do-it-yourself and the increasing reliance placed on specialists.

178 [322] [323] [286] There are some encouraging signs of revival or new life in the manufacture of Okinawan art objects. Okinawan lacquer ware, which is acknowledged by some to be the world's finest, is being sold in large quantity to members of the occupation. The owner of a large pottery works in Naha told the author that pottery from tombs is being collected to serve as models in restoring an older style and superior type of pottery. An Okinawan textile technique known as biingata (Okinawan; in Japanese, 'Benigata') was virtually lost during the war, but this art is still being carried on by one Shuri family, and recent publicity and aroused interest seems likely to insure survival.

178 407 Power and Machinery Agricultural machinery has come into use quite recently on Okinawa. Pitts states that the labor-saving rice thresher first came into widespread use in the thirties. Older methods of flailing or rubbing the rice over a mat, canvas, or stone surface were also observed as being in common use. In numerous instances it was brought out that wartime losses had necessitated a return to an earlier and cruder means of threshing.

The old-fashioned, hand-operated rice polisher has gone out of use in Kanegusuku, and all rice is now polished in the village rice mill which operates on a gasoline engine.

In many communities the gasoline-operated sugar mill has replaced the [257] horse-powered mill. More important, however, is the fact that the small community mill remains popular, and the farmer is resistant toward using the large sugar factories (see chapter on Rural Economy).

178 379 [378] Electricity, common only to the towns and cities before the war, is now found in many villages, and those who are without it are looking forward to its installation. The kerosene lamps now in use in most rural homes cast a dim light and constitute a serious fire hazard in homes of thatch and wood.

178 406 The bulldozer has come into use as a means of opening new land and constructing rice fields. Farmers in Kanegusuku and Nanahan made use of this method during the period of the authors' study of these two villages. Formerly this sort of work required the labor of a number of men over a considerable